

Sinn Fein and Foxhunting in Ireland

THE chaotic political situation in Ireland has had its effect on the hunting season, as on almost every other activity in the country. It might even be said that hunting was marked out for special attention by the party which includes the majority of the people. The reason for this is that the people who hunt, diametrically differ in politics from the majority.

It must not be thought for a moment that the peasantry or the common people are opposed to hunting. The contrary is the case. The Irish people are devoted to the chase, as they are to all forms of sport.

There is no more inspiring spectacle than a pack of hounds in full cry after a fox, with a big field of ladies and gentlemen, well mounted, following up and taking the ditches, hedges and banks as they come.

The populace invariably turns out to watch the sight, and it is not uncommon to see the workers leave their work and hie them to the nearest hill whence they may watch the progress of the hunt and hear the "music" of the pack.

In former times permission to hunt over land was given by the landlord, the occupying tenant having no alternative but to permit the hunt. Nowadays, since every farmer has become the owner of his own farm, it is he who grants permission. The hunt must have the permission and good will of the peasantry at large; otherwise there can be no hunting.

The chief difficulty is that those who ride to hounds include many of what may be called the "governing" classes, that is, those who hold office in the executive government, and military officers, and in the sharp cleavage which now exists between the populace in general and these classes, the necessary good will is not always forthcoming. Thus it is that while the sport in itself is popular, there is a certain amount of nervousness among hunting people that at any moment they may be ordered off the lands over which they are riding. This is particularly the case when it is remembered that toward the end of last season hunting was prematurely brought to a close because of a demand made by Sinn Fein that the various hunts should unite in a demand for the release of all the Sinn Fein prisoners there in jail for various offences.

The hunts being composed of all sections of politics and particularly of official people who are not supposed to have any politics at all could not agree to ac-

cept such a resolution and so many of the hunts had to be brought to an end.

This season the hunts are making a start tentatively, and it would seem that there is not likely to be any general opposition. In addition to the sporting instincts of the people which lead them to favor the hunt, there are other practical considerations. The hunt affords very considerable well paid employment at the kennels, and various laboring associations have combined to request farmers and others not to prevent the hunting, inasmuch as the dissolution of the kennels would throw many families out of employment.

The farmers themselves have a direct inducement to encourage the hunt, as through it they have a remunerative market for oats and hay. These considerations, while in themselves weighty, would not prevail

if it should happen that military officers or other "objectionable" persons were allowed to take part in the hunt, and so it is that the success of the season depends to a large extent on the people who hunt.

The opening meet of the ward union staghounds (of which a photograph is shown), took place recently at a place about twelve miles from the city of Dublin. Upward of a hundred mounted people, ladies and gentlemen, assembled and took part in the chase, while hundreds on foot and in motor cars came in the hope of getting a look at the sport. Other hunts, such as the Meath foxhounds, the Kilkenny, the Galway Blazers, the Westmeaths and the Limericks have been busy cub-hunting, a process of "blooding" the hounds preliminary to the season proper. Most of the noted packs throughout the country are ready to make a start.



NEW YEAR'S DAY now seems to be permanently fixed on our calendar at "January 1," but time was when it served as a "movable feast," inasmuch as it was shoved around on the calendar here and there. At one time the New Year was believed to begin about the 25th of March. Then Julius Caesar, who will be remembered as one-time Emperor of Rome, had his own particular brand of calendar made to order, which caused the New Year to fall on what is now January 13th.

Omar Khayyam, expert in astronomy and wine, tried his hand at it, and it must be said that he did better than the party who fixed up a calendar for the late lamented Julius; yet Omar did not seem to be extremely proud of his ability to dabble in astronomy, for he wrote:

"Ah, but my Computations, People
say,
Reduce the Year to better Reckoning?
—Nay,
'Twas only striking from the
Calendar
Unborn tomorrow and dead
Yesterday."

Omar failed to fill out the year by several days and it is to Pope Gregory XIII that we owe our present calendar. At various intervals since 1582 the years have been rounded out accurately, thanks to the Gregorian reckoning. It was Gregory who conferred an everlasting blessing upon the spinster by granting her a leap year every four years.

And so it is when we go out to the cabaret to usher in the new year with food and song, we lift up our voices in a vociferous "Happy New Year" as the last stroke of twelve o'clock midnight, December 31st, falls upon our ears.

Speaking literally of New Year's days, "there are others." The Chinamen go stolidly about their business on January 1, but when February 2nd falls they dress in their best, pay all their bills and go about greeting each other with a grinning nasal falsetto "Kung Hi." To a Chinaman that is a far better way of saying "Happy New Year" than the English method.

New Years in Other Lands

The Chinese cannot exactly remember when they began computing time with the beginning of the year falling on or about February 2nd. It all depends on the moon with them. Sometimes it comes as early as January 30th and again as late as February 4th. When the Chinaman celebrates New Year he begins on January 21st and keeps it up to February 19th, but the big "Kung Hi day" is February 2nd.

In Russia and in Greece what was good enough for Julius Caesar is good enough for them, in that they use the Julian system of reckoning, and their more or less happy New Year falls upon January 13th.

If Marc Anthony ever paid a formal New Year's call to that well-known social leader of ancient Egypt, Cleopatra, he did so on September 22nd, and certain native Egyptians to this day leave their rice fields and their looms, put on their best garments and go down to their temples to worship on that date.

For more than a thousand years the Jews have celebrated "Roshashona" on "New Years," in September. It does not always fall upon the same date, although very close to it, the date being governed by previous Jewish holidays. This is a day of feasting and of services in the synagogues.

In Turkey the Mohammedans lift their hands to Allah and beseech a year of blessings on the 28th of January, for that is their New Year. In Persia, as in some few parts of Egypt, the New Year falls on September 22nd while in parts of Tibet they reckon the beginning of the New Year from the first of August.

In some of our Indian reservations where the "original Americans," the Indians, still adhere to many of their tribal customs, New Year's Day depends entirely upon weather conditions. When the last snows have gone and the first green shoots of grass appear the Indians hail the time as the beginning of another year. In the old days it was with them a season of dancing and feasting. It marked the time when the danger of famine was passed for game would no longer

be snow-bound and soon there would be scores of roots, bulbs and green things for food, while rivers, ponds and lakes would be free of their ice feet and their fish traps could once more be set.

The poor old New Year patron saint—if there be such a person—must be very busy indeed since there is a New

Year's day almost every month of the year in some part of the world or other. Furthermore, almost every country has had its New Year's day shifted about much as a fussy housewife shifts about a bit of furniture in the front room to get a better effect.

Even China had a different time for its New Year once, as ancient records show, although in what century, is not known. This used to be during the autumn equinox and in the days of ancient Egypt long before Pharaoh, their New Year also arrived during the equinox. In ancient Greece New Year was observed, in the time of Pericles, in the summer solstice, or June 21st. Later, during the time of Solon, they changed their New Year's day to the winter solstice and made it about Dec. 21st.

It was Julius Caesar who first declared that the Roman New Year should begin in January. This was upon the coming of Christianity. Before that time the Jewish people observed their New Year's day on the 25th of March, or the beginning of spring, but shortly after that they changed it to September.

Until William the Conqueror stumbled and fell upon the sands as he landed upon Albion shores, the New Year had been observed on what is now our Christmas Day, but William was crowned on the first of January and he, too, made that the official New Year. After he died England fell in with the rest of Christendom for a while and jogged New Year's day ahead again to March 25th.

Then it began to be discovered that with all these peculiar reckonings in calendars it was becoming difficult to establish ages or accurate historical dates, and the Gregorian calendar grew into favor again. The Catholic countries were first to accept the Gregorian time which made New Year's day fall on the first of January. Later the Protestant countries adopted it, but poor old New Years didn't settle down to a permanent day of his own throughout most of the Christian countries until as late as the year 1752.